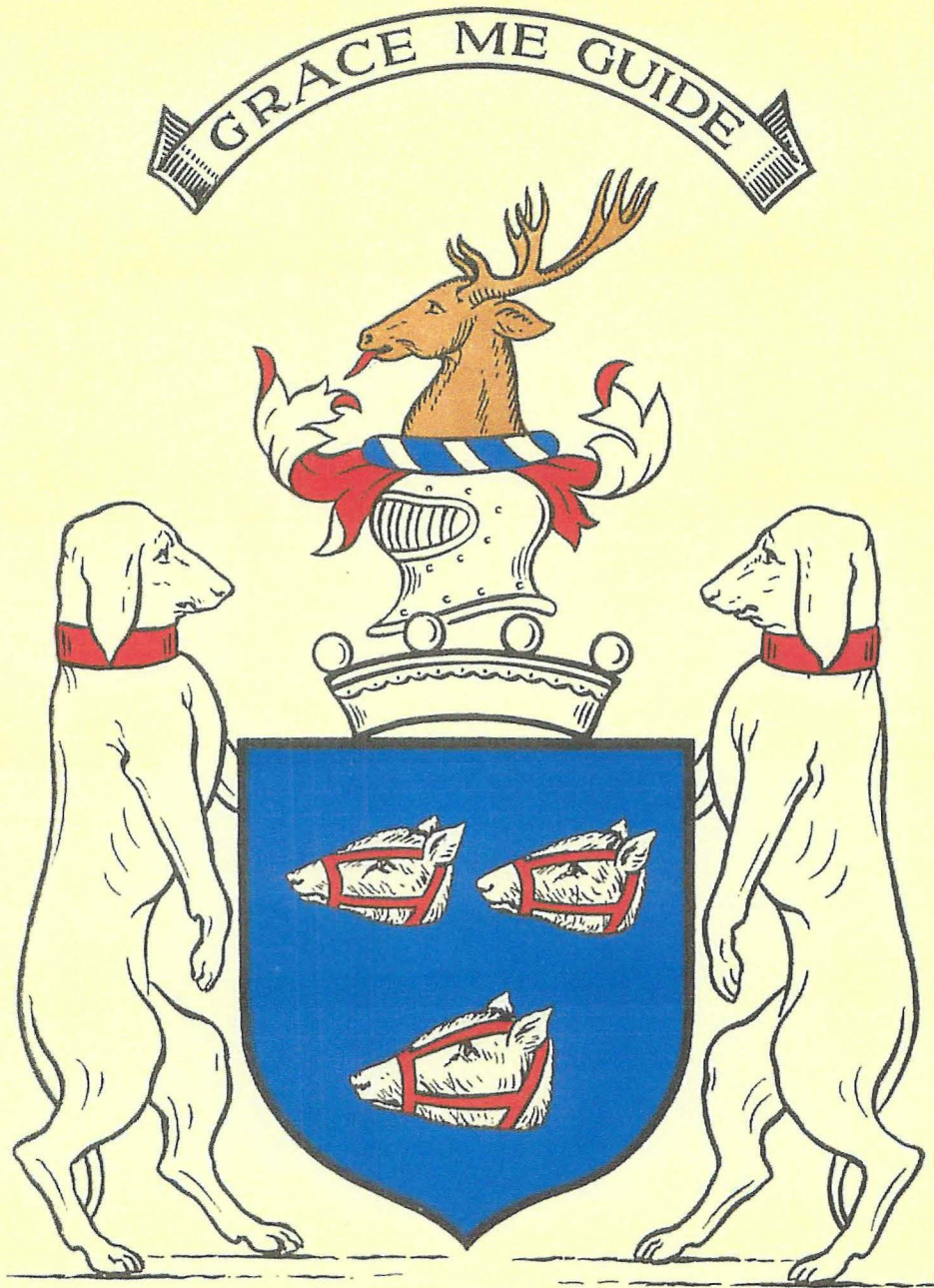


THE HOUSE OF FORBES



ARMS OF LORD FORBES.

(From the Lyon Register, Vol. I., p. 94.)

"The Right honourable William Lord Forbes for his achievement, bears. *Azure*, three bears' heads, couped, 2 & 1 *argent*, muzzled *gules*. Above the shield his Crowne; over the same ane helmet befitting his degree (mantled *gules*, doubled *argent*). Next is placed on ane torse, for his crest, a stag's head, attyred with ten tynes, *proper*. Supported by two blood hounds, collared *gules*, the motto in ane scroll above the crest, *Grace me Guide*."

THE HOUSE OF FORBES

EDITED BY

ALISTAIR AND HENRIETTA TAYLER

Joint Authors of "The Book of the Duffs," "Lord Fife and his Factor,"
"Jacobites of Aberdeenshire and Banffshire," "Jacobite Letters of Lord
Pitsligo," "The Jacobite Cess Roll for the County of Aberdeen in 1715,"
etc., etc.

ABERDEEN

PRINTED FOR THE THIRD SPALDING CLUB

MCMXXXVII

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY THE ABERDEEN UNIVERSITY PRESS LIMITED

INTRODUCTION

BY LORD FORBES

THE project for a complete history of the family of Forbes is nearly a century old. A letter now in the Library of King's College, Aberdeen, from John Forbes-Robertson, father of Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson, shows that in the year 1847 the writer was already lamenting the non-delivery of a Forbes History, for two copies of which he had subscribed in advance. This was to have been written by John Forbes of Old Meldrum, factor for the Earl of Kintore, and descended from the family of Tolquhon (see page 413). John Forbes had industriously collected material for improving upon the only extant authority on the subject, namely, the little work written by Matthew Lumsden, son-in-law of the 6th Lord Forbes, at the bequest of the 8th Lord when Master of Forbes, in 1580.

This history, almost entirely without dates, though brought down to the lifetime of its author, dealt hardly at all with persons then living, of whom it is frequently said "they can speak for themselves," and definitely neglected certain branches, of whom Lumsden says "I tire me to write." The author also unfortunately omits to give a complete list of all those Forbes, of whom there were many, killed at Flodden or at Pinkie, the latter within his own lifetime.

Nearly a century later, in 1667, William Forbes of Leslie undertook to bring the work up to date, but still in the same bald and somewhat scriptural fashion of so and so "had ane son married on so and so," with frequent blanks for Christian names, the most fantastic spellings of place names, and still no dates.

To this was attached, later, a brief memoir of the Culloden family and its descent, written by the father of the famous Lord President. The whole, eked out with a short dissertation on Scottish History, on early legends, and the vanity of human wishes, interspersed with many moral reflections and prefaced by a laudatory dedication to the 18th

THE HOUSE OF FORBES

Lord Forbes, and forming in all quite a small pamphlet, represents the only effort in Forbes' genealogy down to 1819, the date of the last edition of Matthew Lumsden.

It is impossible now to discover exactly how much material the next historian, John Forbes of Old Meldrum, actually collected, but he himself thought it of sufficient importance to leave, in 1852, his MS. as a legacy to his wife's nephews, with a request that they would bring out the work as soon as possible and a new edition whenever it should be called for. A prospectus of his work and list of subscribers had also been issued and widely circulated. The nephews, Forbes Manson and John Manson, the latter being of Fingask and a banker in Aberdeen, do not seem to have taken the bequest very seriously or done anything with the book, and eventually turned it over to William Troup of St. Andrew's University. The exact date of this has not been ascertained, but on 4th June, 1867, Troup wrote to John Manson to say he had examined the MS. submitted to him and found it in many ways defective and incomplete, and four years later he told another correspondent that these papers were "not of great importance," but he evidently always had it in his mind himself to issue a new edition of Matthew Lumsden with a comprehensive introduction and genealogies of all branches as he should be able to compile them (with the assistance of many friends); there being, as he said, "still some decayed branches of which he needed particulars." The reason why he interested himself in the matter is not known. My uncle, Horace Courtenay, who succeeded in 1868, once wrote that he "wondered what has caused Mr. Troup to have such an affection for the Forbes family." It was probably scientific interest in genealogy. He corresponded with many genealogists and antiquarians, such as Andrew Jervise (who had himself been asked to write a Forbes history, but had declined for lack of leisure), Alexander Johnston, Andrew Mitchell Gill, Dr. Cramond, etc., and, as the acknowledged historian of the family, was asked in 1879 to draw up a family tree for John Forbes-Robertson, mentioned above.

In 1886 he had much correspondence with John Forbes of the Commercial Bank of Australia, but unfortunately the connection of the latter with the original family is not mentioned in the letters preserved, nor that of the many Forbeses in Jamaica, who were also interested, as well as others in the United States, etc.

In the year 1891 Colonel Allardyce wrote and introduced himself to William Troup as a fellow-worker in the same field, he himself

INTRODUCTION

having a Forbes grandmother of the Callendar branch. At that period William Troup, who had retired from active work, was living at Bridge of Allan and devoting himself very largely to his Forbes studies. But in 1896 he wrote to Allardyce that owing to ill-health and old age he had resolved to "put all his papers, the results of years of labour, in the hands of the Spalding Club." To these papers, as classified by Allardyce, is owing much of the detail in the second part of the present work.

Previous to this, in the year 1888, Allardyce, as Convener of the Family History Committee of the New Spalding Club, had reported that Lord Forbes had offered the use of all his family MSS. and charters to the Club, with a view to a family history being compiled, and that the Committee recommended that this offer should at once be accepted and an editor found. But in the following year, after an examination, which must have been somewhat cursory, Allardyce wrote a report, still extant, to the effect "that the collection does not afford material for aiding in the compilation of a history of the Forbeses." Whether in this he was not mistaken, the first part of this history will show.

He did, however, extract several interesting papers bearing on local matters, which he included in his Miscellany for the New Spalding Club, and proceeded during the two decades which followed to continue the leisurely collection of Forbes genealogical material. One James Michie made a number of excerpts of Forbes data from public records and these were acquired by Colonel Allardyce and used by him. In 1909 the late David Murray Rose wrote and offered to the Colonel, at a valuation, a further large collection of transcripts which he had made in Edinburgh of Sasines, services of heirs, etc., of persons of the name of Forbes for an American enquirer (who had not paid him). These were accepted and incorporated among the Allardyce material. Advancing years and failing eyesight caused Colonel Allardyce to abandon the idea of publishing a Forbes book, and Lachlan Forbes of Inverernan next took up the task and made a further collection of data. His proposal was that the history of each branch should be written by a member of that branch and that a Symposium of Forbes history should result, presumably with himself as general editor, but nothing came of the plan and his MSS. were left in great confusion.

Mr. William Murison and Mr. Walter Menzies was each in turn approached with a view to taking up the work of completing a history of the Forbes family, but each was compelled to refuse it. Mr. Michael Forbes Tweedie, descended from the Waterton Forbeses, had, as early

THE HOUSE OF FORBES

as 1899, been in communication with Allardyce concerning his own family, and in 1926 was definitely entrusted by the Third Spalding Club with the task of bringing to completion the long delayed history, but after some years' work he was also compelled to abandon it. In the Spring of 1935 the Club appointed Miss Henrietta and Mr. Alistair Tayler, the present editors, as tenth in the field. These two indefatigable workers, to whom the Club and those interested in Scottish history are already indebted for having brought to light so much material of general interest, realizing that death had cut short the efforts of many of their predecessors, decided to devote their whole time to the task, and to their zeal and unflagging energy is due the fact that the History has at last been completed in the brief space of two years.

All that now remains to set the seal to the accomplishment of this century-old project is, that I should, on behalf of the Club and the members of my House, convey to Miss Tayler and her brother sincere congratulations and thanks for having not merely provided a book of real historical interest for members of the Club and an invaluable record for all of the name of Forbes, but also a standard for future family histories.

FORBES,

President of the Third Spalding Club.

*At Putachie,
Castle Forbes,
March, 1937.*

EDITORS' NOTE

THE EDITORS would like to take this opportunity of thanking all those of their Scottish predecessors in the field of Forbes genealogy whose papers and notes they have had the privilege of consulting, and also for permission to consult the transcripts from printed records in England collected by Mr. Forbes Tweedie, the useful tables of modern day Forbesees made by the late Lady Helen Forbes, and a careful chronicle of the Newe Branch, the work of Miss Bettine Forbes. They have also to offer their most respectful and grateful thanks to His Majesty the King for his gracious permission to print extracts from the papers at Windsor; to the authorities there, and in all the Public Offices at home and abroad, for permission to print original documents found, as well as to the heads of the various branches of the family who have generously given access to their private papers and photographs of family portraits.

Owing to the amount of material available in connection with all the known branches, the editors are reluctantly obliged to abandon their idea of a chapter on Forbesees in foreign countries whose connection with the main stem has been lost, such as Elise Rosée Forbes, mother of the famous Count Charles Forbes de Montalembert, etc. This may perhaps see the light in some future Miscellany volume of the Third Spalding Club, and any information on the subject will be gladly welcomed, as well as any correction or amplification of the work already done and here presented.

ALISTAIR TAYLER.
HENRIETTA TAYLER.

March, 1937.

ADDENDUM

As we go to press a document has been brought to our notice, at Windsor, being a letter from John Forbes to H.R.H. the Prince Consort, dated Old Meldrum, 17 Sept., 1848:

"May it please your Royal Highness,

"I presume to forward to your Royal Highness the accompanying prospectus of a work on which I am at present engaged with every prospect of being able to bring it to a successful termination, and to solicit the honour of being permitted to place your illustrious name at the head of my list of subscribers and to send your Royal Highness a presentation copy on its issuing from the press."

He then apologises for not asking the honour of dedicating the work to the Prince, as it is already dedicated to "my chief, Lord Forbes," but thinks the Prince will be interested, being an occasional resident in the country of the Forbesees!

The answer to this effusion was a note on the back of the letter that the Prince had no wish to subscribe.